Elgin Museum and Historical Society

October, 2018

MUSEUM HAS A NEW HOME!

After three years of grueling organization, perseverance and determination, the Elgin Museum and Historical Society has a new home. The City of Elgin is leasing the former city hall to the museum, as the city moves its site to the former W C Construction property.

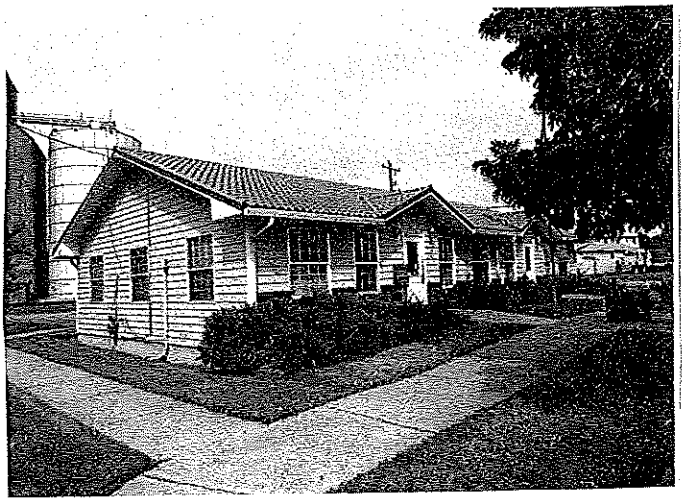
Originally, the city donated a double wide home across from the Train Depot, and the committee worked on the site two years, cleaning and tearing out walls, installing handicapped access doors and more. The finish work on the building was a project coordinated with the high school shop classes.

After the City Hall became available, emphasis shifted to the new building, which needed minor changes based on the museum board's tour of the building.

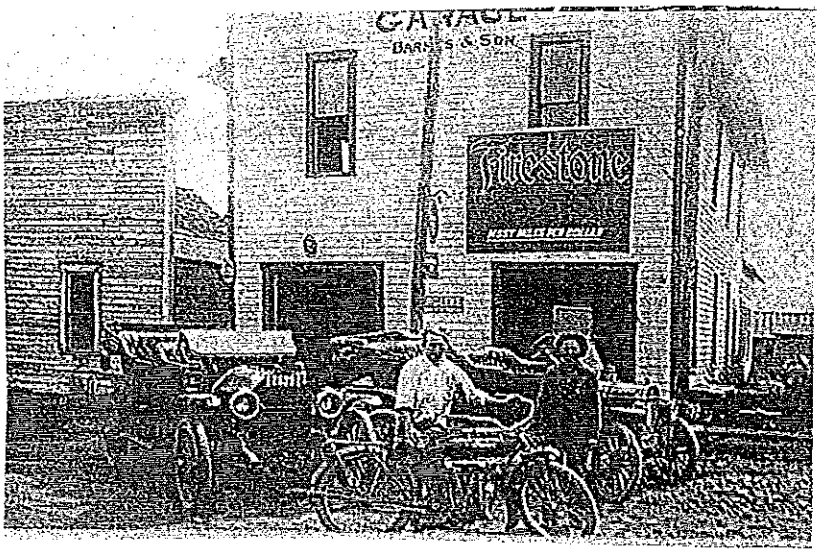
The move will be a slow process, according to Vice-President Everett Grandee, as each item has to be carefully evaluated and recorded.

The location of the museum lends itself to a historical corner with the historic Opera House, built in 1912, and the old city jail of the early 1900's. Across the street is the depot where the Eagle Cap Excursion Train departs following the paths of the Grande Ronde and Wallowa Rivers.

The Board has discussed the possibility of bringing in additional structures, if found, to be an "old city" around the museum grounds, but the idea is a dream for the future. The Board's hope is to create a destination site for visitors traveling to the Wallowa and Joseph areas. gh



SITE OF THE NEW ELGIN MUSEUM



Old City Hall before the City Hall/Opera House

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We have had some changes with the Board of Directors. Scott Abernethy and Vicki Correll have joined the organization. Scott was on the original board and did much of the organizational work as the group developed the overall plan for the museum. Also, Charlie Horn has graciously agreed to step down from the board to allow other individuals to participate. However, he will continue to volunteer his efforts to help organize the facility and work in it as we welcome visitors in the future.

ELGIN MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

c/o 68070 Hunter Road
Summerville, Oregon 97876

Phone: 541-534-4390 or 541-437-9821 (Everett)

Directors: Gerald Hopkins, President
Everett Grandeen, Vice-President
Andrew Luse, Secretary
David Reed, Treasurer
Vicki Correl
Scott Abernethy
Jack Howard
Jim Way
Steve Oliver
Maureen Smolkowski

Help make the Elgin Museum a reality. Help us preserve and exhibit this area's proud and wonderful past. Join the Elgin Museum and Historical Society. We are always looking for new members, volunteers and donations which are tax free.

TYPES OF MEMBERSHIPS:
Individual:.....$10.00 a year
Family.....$20.00 a year
Patron.....$50.00 a year
Business.....$50.00 a year
Benefactor.....$100.00
Life.....$300.00

Contact us: c/o 68070 Hunter Road
Summerville, Oregon 97876
Phone: 541-534-4390 or 541-437-982

The Board would like to print the names of those making donations unless otherwise specified. All donations to the Elgin Museum and Historical Society are tax deductible.

Donation from David Reed

Notes from readers...

You get a lot of interesting news for your paper. I enjoyed the co-valedictorian article. I remember three brothers who left for the service at that time. Two were in the army and one in the marines. Our local paper still gets pictures and stories from some men that are still able to tell the story of fighting. ---Marilyn Krogh, Billings, Montana

Dear Dr. Hopkins:

Thank you for the information on the Green Peas in the Elgin area.

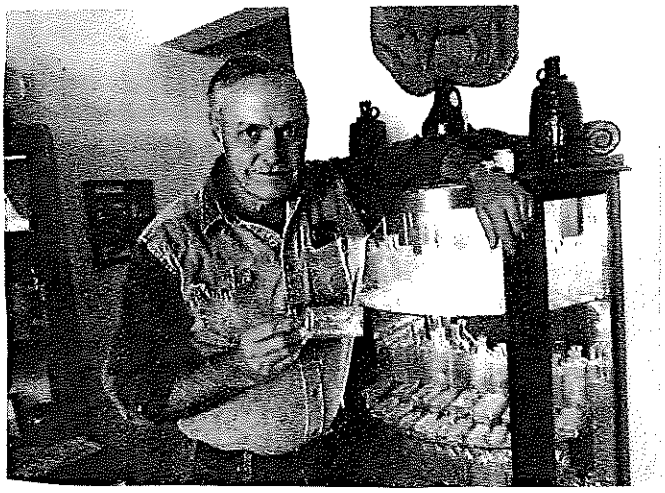
I apologize for taking so long in getting back to you, the information was placed in my pile of research notes and I just recently came across it again. This will be helpful to me in my quest to document the great pea industry in the Blue Mountain District.

This was an industry that over 75 years had a huge impact on the District (SE WA, NE, OR, Central ID) and has almost completely disappeared from the area. It is a story that I believe needs to be told for posterity.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

--Alfred Cummins, Walla, Walla, Washington

Charlie Horn is pictured in front of his case of bottles with an extremely rare EE Hewitt Pharmacy Druggist bottle out of La Grande.



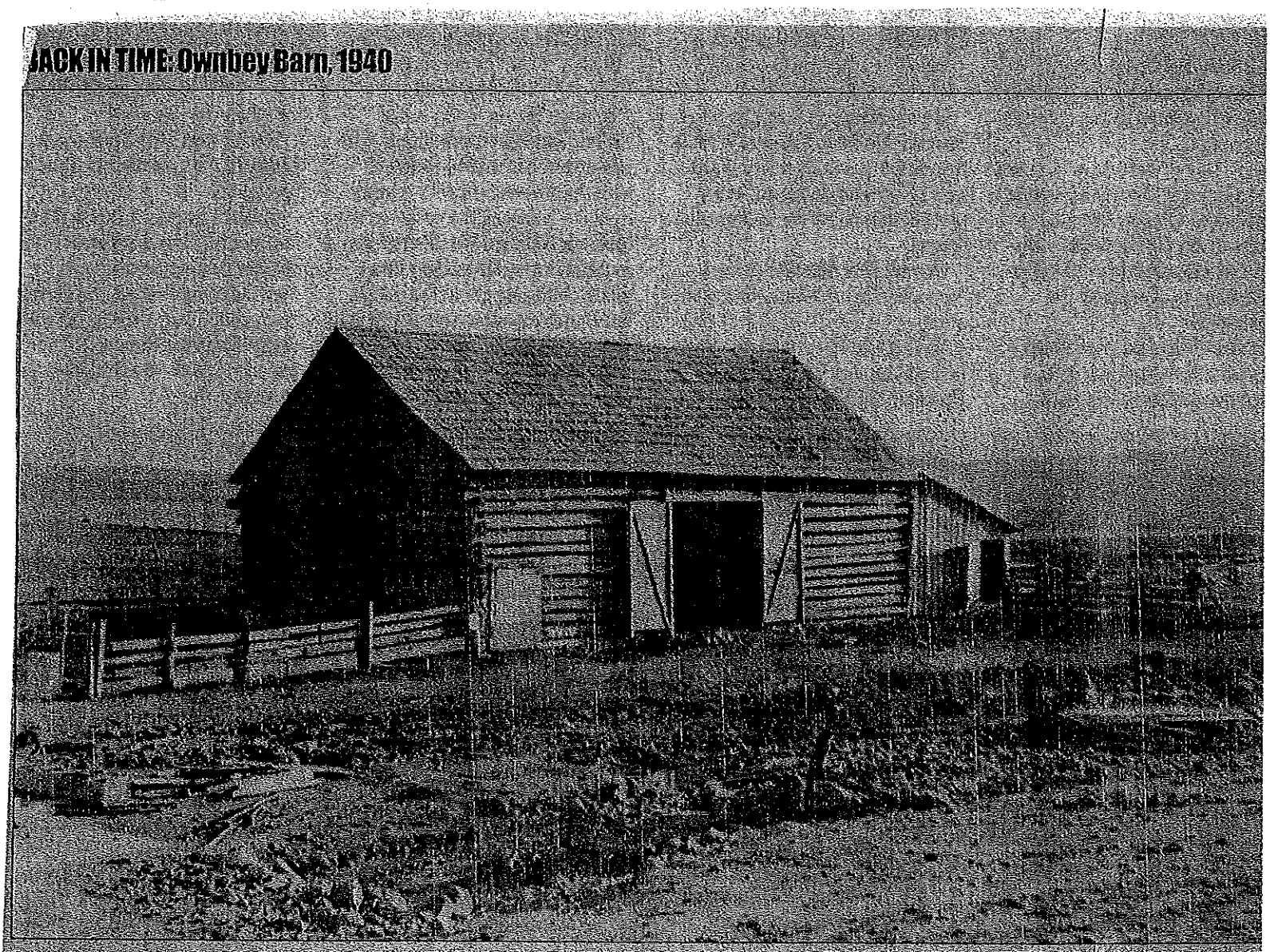
The photo shown on page one was taken ten years after the old City Hall had been converted into a garage and the first automobile agency in Elgin, according to Bernal Hug's History of Elgin .

Quoting from Hug, The first automobile agency, "where 'Dad' Barnes and Dorse Barnes sold Model "'T' Fords. Downstairs in the City Hall were kept hose carts for fighting fire and supplies were also stored here. The upstairs was a large room that served various purposes. Time and time again in was used for a schoolroom because of the crowded condition of the White Schoolhouse."

On the Oregon Trail…..
Devil's Gate is a narrow gorge carved by the Sweetwater River. In the early 1960's four young women from a wagon train climbed the ridge above the gorge. One of the young ladies fell and her grave board was inscribed: "Here lies the body of Caroline Todd. Whose soul had lately gone to God: Ere redemption was too late, She was redeemed at Devil's Gate."

A previous newsletter featured the Ownbey Barn

JACK IN TIME: Ownbey Barn, 1940



Bob Hall photo

This old picture is of the Ownbey Barn that was at one time used as a fort by settlers in the Cricket Flat area during the Nez Perce War, which started back in 1877. The barn had been built on the Ownbey farm northeast of Elgin with the help of a community barn raising on July 4, 1876. The photograph was taken in 1940 and was originally in the Bernal Hug Collection.

THE COUGAR PART 5

The cougar, a big member of the cat family, can be found in all types of habitat extending from the Artic regions to the southern tip of South America. The record sized cougar was killed in Arkansas, weighing 360 pounds. A road killed cat was weighed in Pendleton, Oregon at 240 pounds. When working with ODFW in Prineville, I weighed one over 220 pounds.

For the most part, this North American cat is a shy, secretive animal often living in the close confines of human populations without being seen. It can be very curious at times and will often follow persons in the woods, keeping just out of sight.

Although they are quite capable of killing a person, cases of cougar attacks are very rare. Close encounters with humans usually occurs from younger cats from a curiosity standpoint. In all my years in the woods, my one close encounter was when a cougar chased my dog back to my pickup. I had to shoot the cat to prevent it from killing the dog.

The cougar is an efficient predator; a single cat being capable of taking down a bull elk. Their main method of taking a deer or elk is wait in ambush or sneak up close to their prey and tackle it with a burst of speed. For fifty yards, the cougar is fast enough to overtake their prey. However, they soon run out of endurance if their prey can stretch the distance out past a hundred yards. They have two main methods of killing their prey. For deer they generally cut off the animal's air by clamping down on the throat. On elk they twist the head until they break the neck.

Cougars are not above taking farm animals. In my years as a biologist, I have recorded kills on every type of domestic animal except cows. For some unknown reason they seem reluctant to kill cows. I once investigate an incident where a cougar killed 40 sheep in one night and have documented several attacks on horses.

Even though the big cats are able to kill big game animals, studies have shown they prefer taking smaller animals when available. Squirrels, rabbits, porcupines, upland game birds, especially turkeys, are all on their menu. They have nearly eliminated the porcupine population in Eastern Oregon. These same studies showed cougars were often injured when taking adult deer and elk. Two animals clashing and rolling on the ground at more than 30 miles per hour often left the cougar with bruises or broken bones.

When taking deer or elk, they always prefer the young during June and July. Cougars will often follow a herd of elk containing a lot of calves. When the herd come to a fence, the cougar will take the calves when they have difficulty crawling through the fence.

A brief history of cougar management is as follows: the population was nearly eliminated when a $50 bounty was given between the years of 1918-1961. In 1967 they were classified as a game animal and a limited number of traps were issued. The population gradually increased during this classification. In 1994 hunting the cats with hounds was banned and the population rapidly increased. It did not take the ODEF too long to realize it was very difficult for a hunter to harvest a cougar without the use of hounds. To increase harvests, they lowered the price of hunting tags and gave out an unlimited number of tags.

Looking to the future of cougar numbers, I would guess that today's huge numbers will depend on two main factors. First, a return to hunting with hounds would reduce their population. Second, an increase in the wolf population would certainly impact their numbers.

Idaho biologists found that wolf packs quickly learned, with the aid of ravens, to quickly find a cougar kill and take it over. The raven, opportunists that they are, have learned to follow cougars around until they make a kill. They then make vocal calls which lead the wolves to the kill. Biologists suspect that this conflict may be the cause of lowering cougar numbers in Idaho.

Speaking from experience, I can say seeing one of these big cats in the woods gives the observer a rare thrill that they will never forget.

Harlan Scott